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SUBJECT: OCTOBER 23 NGO RE-REGISTRATION UPDATE

REF: MOSCOW 11831

11. (SBU) We continue to receive positive reports on the re-registration of foreign NGOs. Of the 29 NGOs that USAID is tracking, another three have been registered by the Federal Registration Service (FRS) since October 20, bringing the total re-registered to eleven. Of the remaining eighteen, seventeen have submitted their applications. These seventeen are keeping a low profile at this time, although a number of them "pre-funded" sub-grantees prior to the October 18 deadline. The FRS is not expected to share further information with the public about the re-registration status of other foreign NGOs until October 27.

12. (SBU) Although some Western press reports have suggested that human rights NGOs are "not getting registered," the evidence to date has not reflected a targeting of these rights-based NGOs. The Danish Refugee Council was re-registered October 19 (reftel). Medecins Sans Frontieres has also been re-registered, as have Oxfam and the International Center for Crisis Prevention. Two bellwethers, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have been late in submitting their applications. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has not yet submitted all of its documents to the FRS, but hopes to do so within the next two weeks. HRW's interlocutor at the FRS has assured it that there will be no problems. Sergei Nikitin, Amnesty International's Head of Office told us that its re-registration application was submitted on October 16. (NOTE: The rules allow the FRS 30 days in which to review applications, although it has been processing re-registration packets in less time than that.) In the meantime, both of these organizations have temporarily ceased external activities.

13. (SBU) COMMENT. Most NGOs expect to be re-registered and there is every indication that the FRS is attempting to process their applications expeditiously. The new pressing deadline is October 31, when registered NGOs will have to submit their third quarter reports and their 2007 program reports. The committee that has been directed to formulate guidance for the contents of the program report was established only last week and has yet to meet. Embassy will continue to monitor both the re-registration process and reporting requirement developments. END COMMENT.

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